Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims replaces prior versions:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A linkage system which links a first computer of a first medical institution with a second computer of a second medical institution through a network,

wherein the first computer comprises:

a database ~~configured to be written/read~~ that stores and retrieves patient data of patients of the first medical institution and medical treatment data related to the patient data;

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file creator configured to create an inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data both extracted from the database and inquiry contents;

an inquiry mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created inquiry file and to address the created e-mail to the second computer through the communication terminal of the first computer;

a reply file reader configured to read out a reply file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the first computer; and

wherein the second computer comprises:

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file reader configured to read out an inquiry file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the second computer;

a data editor configured to edit medical treatment data in the read inquiry file based on data entry through an input device of the second computer;

a reply file creator configured to create a reply file including the edited medical treatment data; and

a reply mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created reply file and to address the created e-mail to the first computer through the communication terminal of the second computer.

Claims 2-4 (canceled)

Claim 5 (previously presented): A linkage system according to claim 1,

wherein each data item of the patient data included in the inquiry file is specified based on data entry through an input device of the first computer.

Claim 6 (currently amended): A computer of a medical institution in a linkage system which links computers to each other through a network, the computer of the medical institution comprising:

a database ~~configured to be written/read~~ that stores and retrieves patient data of patients of the medical institution and medical treatment data related to the patient data;

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file creator configured to create an inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data both extracted from the database and inquiry contents;

an inquiry mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created inquiry file and to address the created e-mail to a target computer through the communication terminal of the computer; and

a reply file reader configured to read out a reply file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of another computer.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A computer of a medical institution according to claim 6, wherein each data item of the patient data included in the inquiry file is specified based on the data entry through an input device of the computer.

Claim 8 (canceled)

Claim 9 (currently amended): A computer of a medical institution in a linkage system which links computers to each other through a network, the computer of the medical institution comprising:

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file reader configured to read out an inquiry file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the computer, said inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data related to the patient data, which are extracted from a database;

a data editor configured to edit medical treatment data in the read inquiry file based on data entry through an input device of the computer;

a reply file creator configured to create a reply file including the edited medical treatment data; and

a reply mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created reply file and to address the created e-mail to the computer specified by the received e-mail through the communication terminal of the computer.

Claims 10 and 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (currently amended): A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program which allows a computer in a linkage system of computers of medical institutions being linked to each other through a network to function as:

an inquiry file reader configured to read out an inquiry file from an e-mail received through a communication terminal of the computer, said inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data related to the patient data, which are extracted from a database;

a data editor configured to edit medical treatment data in the read inquiry file based on data entry through an input device of the computer;

a reply file creator configured to create a reply file including the edited medical treatment data; and

a reply mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created reply file and to address the created e-mail to the computer specified by the received e-mail through the communication terminal of the computer.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A linkage system which links a first computer of a first medical institution with a second computer of a second medical institution through a network,

wherein the first computer comprises:

a database ~~configured to be written/read~~ <u>that stores and retrieves</u> patient data of patients of the first medical institution and medical treatment data related to the patient data;

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file creator configured to create an inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data both extracted from the database and inquiry contents;

an ID data creator configured to create ID data uniquely identifying the created inquiry file;

an inquiry mail creator configured to create an e-mail having the created ID data and being attached to the created inquiry file and to address the created e-mail to the second computer through the communication terminal of the first computer;

an ID data reader configured to read out ID data from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the first computer;

a reply file reader configured to read out a reply file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the first computer;

a mail controller configured to control <u>a pair of</u> an inquiry mail and a reply mail ~~in pairs~~<u>,</u> provided that they have ID data corresponding to each other; and

wherein the second computer comprises:

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

an inquiry file reader configured to read out an inquiry file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the second computer;

an ID data reader configured to read out ID data from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the second computer;

an ID data creator configured to create ID data corresponding to the read ID data;

a data editor configured to edit medical treatment data in the read inquiry file based on data entry through an input device of the second computer;

a reply file creator configured to create a reply file including the edited medical treatment data;

a reply mail creator configured to create an e-mail having the created ID data and being attached to the created reply file and to address the created e-mail to the first computer through the communication terminal of the second computer; and

a mail controller configured to control a pair of an inquiry mail and a reply mail in pairs, provided that they have ID data corresponding to each other.

Claims 14 and 15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (previously presented): A linkage system according to claim 1, wherein the data value of each data item of the patient data included in the inquiry file is modified based on data entry through an input device of the first computer.

Claim 17 (previously presented): A computer of the medical institution according to claim 6, wherein the data value of each data item of the patient data included in the inquiry file is modified based on data entry through an input device of the computer.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A <u>computer-readable medium encoded with a</u> computer program which allows a computer in a linkage system of computers of medical institutions being linked to each other through a network to function as:

an inquiry file creator configured to create an inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data <u>related to the patient data</u> both extracted from a database of the computer and inquiry contents;

an inquiry mail creator configured to create an e-mail being attached to the created inquiry file and to address the created e-mail to a target computer through a communication terminal of the computer; and

a reply file reader configured to read out a reply file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal.

Claim 19 (currently amended): A computer of a medical institution in a linkage system which links computers to each other through a network, the computer of the medical institution comprising:

a database ~~configured to be written/read~~ <u>that stores and retrieves</u> patient data of patients of the medical institution and medical treatment data related to the patient data;

a communication terminal configured to send out an e-mail to the network and to receive an e-mail from the network;

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an inquiry file creator configured to create an inquiry file having patient data and medical treatment data both extracted from the database and inquiry contents;

an ID data creator configured to create ID data uniquely identifying the created inquiry file;

an inquiry mail creator configured to create an e-mail having the created ID data and being attached to the created inquiry file and to address the created e-mail to a target computer through the communication terminal of the first computer;

an ID data reader configured to read out ID data from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the computer;

a reply file reader configured to read out a reply file from an e-mail received through the communication terminal of the computer;

a mail controller configured to control <u>a pair of</u> an inquiry mail and a reply mail ~~in pairs,~~ provided that they have ID data corresponding each other; and

a display controller configured to display <u>a pair of</u> an inquiry mail and a reply mail ~~in pairs,~~ provided that they have ID data corresponding to each other.

Claim 20 (canceled)